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THE SON OF ROYAL LANGBRITH.

BY WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS.

PART V.

XXIII.

AFTER Mrs. Enderby went out Dr. Anther remained in a silence which the rector could not quite bring himself to break. He thought that his visitor looked fagged, and that he looked even more sad than fagged. He would have liked to ask Anther about Hawberk, in the way of a beginning, but somehow he did not, though he had heard that Hawberk was holding up a little, and he was interested in the experiment of his physician, as it was known to any one who cared to listen to Hawberk's sanguine prophecies of the outcome.

Mrs. Enderby, lingering honorably out of intelligible eavesdropping, but not out of earshot, was disinterestedly impatient of the interval before Anther spoke.

"What do you think," he began, and at the sound of his voice she fled from temptation, "of evil done in the past, and so effectually covered up, except from two or three people, that for the public generally it never existed: should you think it the duty of the two or three, or any one of them to make it known?"

"I'm not quite sure that I follow you," said the rector, but confessing his interest by his look of prompt animation. He was seeking, as he professed, a stronger light upon it, but he could not feel that Anther cast this light upon it by what he said next.

"Take the case of —," the doctor resumed, and he named a famous case which once agonized the public with a curiosity still unsatisfied. "He must have known, and a few others must have known quite as well, whether he was guilty or innocent in that business. Do you believe it would have been to the advantage of religion or morals to have had the fact generally known; or was it just as well to have had it hushed up forever, as it apparently was?"

"I don't see what advantage the common knowledge of it would have been," the rector said, still feeling his way rather blindly. "I can't see what use it would have been as concerns this world, to have had the fact known. If the fact would benefit some one,

save some one from unjust suspicion, relieve some burdened spirit, yes; but otherwise not, I should say."

"You think the truth itself, merely as truth, has no claim upon our recognition?"

"What is truth?"

"Ah, that's what jesting Pilate asked!"

"Isn't the truth," the rector pursued, "that absolute entirety of fact which includes not only every circumstance, but also every extenuation in motive and temperament?"

"Well?"

"That sort of truth can never be made known in this world, and the brute fact doesn't express it."

"You remand it to the Last Day?"

"I leave it to God. The Searcher of hearts can alone find it out, and judge it. If we press for judgment here, we are in danger of becoming executioners. But I am never able to deal with abstractions, such as this case has become. You can't lay down any rule that will fit an abstraction. I don't like to lay down any rule at all, except such as I find given us. If there were any particular case—any concrete instance—"

"There is a particular case," the doctor said, "a concrete instance, but I'm afraid that the lapse of time has rendered it as much an abstraction as that other case, in fact has outlawed it."

The rector could only answer at first, "I should like to hear anything you have to tell me." But he added, "Why are we fencing?"

"Are we fencing? I didn't mean it," the doctor said with his fagged look and his sad look possessing the rector again with compassion. "I'll lower my point, anyway. I'll go back to the beginning. If a man had so successfully lived what they call a double life, that he had kept each life largely a secret from the other, and kept everybody but those he had most wronged altogether out of the secret, and there were but one impartial witness of the facts, would it become the duty of that witness to make the facts known, when the man was dead, and the evil he did had not apparently lived after him?"

"I think you'll have to be a little more specific."

"Have we no such thing as a duty to justice? Is there no such thing as justice?"

The rector looked grave. "I have never seen any instance of justice in the world. I have seen many instances of mercy. I should say we have a duty to mercy. We are warned more than once to make sure first of our own sinlessness before we offer to judge the sins of others."

"But imagine that the guilt of the man I am imagining had imposed itself upon the public for virtue, and was apparently left to the Last Judgment, as so many things—most things, in fact, as I agree with you—seem left, and time had gone on till it became, by this chance and by that, the question of recognizing a cruel

miscreant as a public benefactor, and holding him up as an example to the young, and celebrating some tuppenny munificence of his as an act of characteristic virtue, of habitual greatness and goodness—”

The rector rose, and his face whitened, as the doctor's had reddened with the rush of feeling into his voice. “Are you talking to me of Royal Langbrith?” he asked.

“I am talking to you of Royal Langbrith,” Anther replied. “And ever since I heard that you had been asked to take part in this preposterous business, I have been talking to you about Royal Langbrith. Not to your knowledge, of course, but in those one-sided colloquies which, I dare say, you hold as well as I when you are working up to face some one whom they concern. When Mrs. Enderby first told me you had been invited by Langbrith's son to join in honoring his father's abominable memory, my impulse was to come at once and tell you what the man had really been. But when that impulse passed, I said to myself that I would think it over; and I have thought it over and thought it over, but never with so much justification in paltering with my duty as you have given me by the things you have just said. It seemed to me, on one side, that it was an outrage upon your own purity and uprightness to let you go on and unwittingly praise that infamous scoundrel. It seemed an atrocious invasion of your rights, an abuse of your ignorance as well as an insult to your office. Then, on the other hand, I asked myself what harm would be done if I let you go on, compared with the harm I should do if I stopped you—the pain I should needlessly inflict; for the truth would now probably never come out, and in the interest of public morals had much better remain hidden. I recognized this long ago. I saw that the time for a public exposure of the man's evil had apparently passed; that it had paralyzed those who had left it hidden; but when I heard that you had been asked to eulogize such a miscreant in public, I felt a new responsibility. I realized that if I let you do so, I should be guilty toward you; yet, if I spoke, I should be putting my burden upon you, and compelling you to the sophistications with which I stifled my own conscience. You could not then stand up and declare the truth before the people: you could only reveal it to that miserable boy; or, if you had not the heart for that, you must stultify yourself and wound him with lying excuses. I paltered with my duty, and I have come at the eleventh hour to do what I ought to have done at once, or never done at all.”

Anther told his story with a fulness which he had wanted even in telling it to Judge Garley. In the sympathy which he felt Enderby was giving him, with that instant self-forgetfulness natural to the born priest, there was invitation which the legal mind could not give him, with its concurrent criticism of his facts and motives. He was dealing now with a man who could appropriate his facts and realize his motives to their remotest intimations and finest

significances. Science and religion met in the study of the life laid bare between them. At any detail from which Anther faltered, Enderby prompted him, and, in the end, nothing was left untold.

"Besides Hawberk, and Mrs. Langbrith and yourself, is there any one knowing to the facts?"

"John Langbrith; but how intimately he knows them I can't say. We have never exchanged confidences. He was on the train with his brother when Royal Langbrith died. Didn't I say? Yes—he died in the smoking-car coming up from Boston, but so suddenly, so secretly, that John Langbrith did not notice anything till he put his hand on the dead man's shoulder to arouse him from his nap when they reached Saxmills. He had died as secretly as he had lived."

"What has become of the woman?"

"Who ever knows what becomes of the woman? Perhaps in this case John Langbrith does. I ought to tell you," Anther added, "that I have put the case to Judge Garley."

"How long ago?"

"Several weeks—a month."

"And knowing the truth, he let me accept a part in this commemoration!"

"You might say the same of me."

"No, I couldn't say the same of you. I can understand the stress there has been upon you, and your reluctance—your fear of being misunderstood—misconstrued. But if Judge Garley had given me a hint— No, I don't blame him, either! I mustn't be cowardly."

The rector sat with his elbow on the arm of his chair, and his head propped on his hand, thinking. What he found first to say, with a sigh, and a forlorn smile was, "It's part of my cowardice that I could wish *you* hadn't told me."

"I was obliged to do it. In this, at least, I have had no selfish motive."

"Of course not. But I must go on all the same, you see." Anther said nothing, and Enderby asked, "The boy is without the least suspicion, the slightest surmise?"

"Absolutely. He was not purposely kept so. But the time for telling him never seemed to come. Who could tell him?"

"It may never come," the rector mused aloud, and he said to Anther, "It hasn't come now."

They were silent together, but the doctor spoke first: "It did cross my mind that you might feel authorized to—"

"No," the rector stopped him; "we must leave it all to God now, as it has been left hitherto. He will know when the son can best bear his father's shame. He will know how to do justice, and when, on the memory of the dead; but until now, in mercy to the living, He has forbore. The circumstances will arrange themselves; the atoms will fall into the order of the divine scheme. We must keep our hands off. *De mortuis*—you know the saying: there

is as much wisdom as kindness in it. There is a feeling—it is mostly a vengeful feeling, I don't know why—that men's evil deeds must not be suffered to lurk in the dark; but perhaps they should, for this life. What would it avail to have them dragged into the light? Everything shall be made known, but perhaps not on earth. Whoever wished to hasten the knowledge of hidden evil, here and now, might well beware of forcing God's purposes, as we understand or misunderstand them. It could not help this community to know the truth about that wretched man. It would only render it cynical and deprave it. But I am not concerned about the son, primarily, I am afraid; or about our fellow citizens. I have the selfish concern of keeping myself clear from falsehood in what I have to do. At present, I don't see how I can, but I shall try; and, meantime, between the two evils before me, I will choose that which seems likest virtue."

Anther was struck with the similarity in the conclusions of the priest and those of the judge, but he did not comment on it. Enderby himself offered none of the reflections in which he seemed lost, and Anther, after a little longer stay, in which nothing suggested itself as a solution, took his leave, without protest from the rector. He carried with him, capriciously, the vision of the rector's neatness, as to the black waistcoat buttoned to his throat, which was without suspicion of those droppings from the rector's full beard such as the doctor remembered noting on the vestments of some clergymen less conscientiously benzined by their wives.

Enderby's wife was otherwise so conscientious that she would not join him in his study, after he returned from seeing Anther to the gate, till he called to her, "Come here, Alice." Then she rustled down-stairs and entered to him with a face eager for the account of his talk with the doctor. At sight of his face, looking up at her from the chair into which he had nervelessly dropped, hers fell.

"Dearest!" she said.

"I am in trouble," he answered. "I want you to help me."

Though a woman whose chief delight was, ordinarily, in the expression and examination of her emotions, she now postponed them, as she was able to do in great emergencies, and closed so promptly and directly with the trouble he owned to her, that he was able after an hour to say, "Well, then, I will do it."

"It's the only thing you could do, and it's the thing you *must* do. It's what suggested itself to you at first; and *I* call it an inspiration."

The notion of an inspiration was something left over from her Unitarian nurture, which she would not deny herself in the present exigency. It had a literary rather than a theological significance, and was less an article of faith than of critical appreciation. Then the rector went to bed, and instead of harassing his worn-out brain by vain dramatizations of the predicament, surprised himself by falling almost immediately asleep.

It was for Dr. Anther to lie awake after he had driven home through the dim Saxmills streets, usually so quiet at half past ten, but to-night only quiescing, after a tumultuous evening of last details in preparation for the morrow. His course lay by the open square on which the library faced, and he noted that the platform built up around the doorway, below the bas-relief, for the invited guests had been draped, since he passed earlier in the evening, with American flags. The tablet was veiled in white cotton cloth, which, in its association with the dead, gave Anther the sense of a shroud, so that he started at the light, gay laugh which burst from the lips of a girl pausing with a young man, and looking up at the platform from the square below. He recognized the voice of Hope Hawberk in the laugh, and in the young man beside her he recognized James Langbrith, and he imagined her teasing him.

He smiled to himself in the prevision of his absence from the group of the invited guests who were to occupy that platform the next day. The committee of arrangements had promptly sent him an invitation; and a second card had come later, under a cover addressed in Langbrith's hand-writing, as if he were not willing that Anther should by any chance be passed over. So far, indeed, Langbrith had subdued his rancor with his old friend. But Anther had determined, from the first, not to be present at the dedication, and he had not faltered since.

The figure of a woman, imaginably some patient who had waited for him in vain, slipped from his gate and went down the obscurity of the street, in the opposite direction, as he drove up to Mrs. Burwell's darkened house. He put his horse and buggy into the barn, and then came round and let himself in at the front door. On the threshold within lay something white, which he felt to be a sealed letter; and, when he had turned up his office lamp, he found it addressed to him, in a hand which he knew. "Dr. Anther," he read, "I want you should not fail to accept James's invitation for to-morrow. He is feeling very anxious you should be there, though he will not say so. If you don't choose to do it for his sake, do it for mine. I would give anything to have you. AMELIA."

He turned it over, as people turn letters over, rather when they have got everything out of them than when they have not, and he knew that the woman he had seen coming away from his gate was Mrs. Langbrith. Her anxiety must have been great to bring her from home so far at that hour, and she must have wished to keep her writing him a secret from her household, if she could not send the letter. She might have hoped to see him, and carried the letter to leave in case she should not find him.

"Why," he asked himself bitterly, "should *we* be doing things by stealth? We hide our affection, as if it were something to be ashamed of. We behave like guilty persons, but you are the most innocent of victims, and I am to blame only for not forcing you to right yourself. I can't stand it, Amelia!"

XXIV.

Langbrith had at first meant to dedicate his father's memorial on grand terms. It had seemed to him not out of scale with the merit of such a man to have the Governor and his staff in full uniform present at the ceremony. But a few drops of ridicule sprinkled on the notion by Falk extinguished it, after an angry sputtering; and he reasoned that to confine the civic interest to Saxmills would be to intensify it, and to appeal still more strongly to the local pride. In his illumination, he declined the offer of even a band from the next town, when it was submitted to him through the committee of arrangements, and decided to have no music but such as the fifes and drums of the Saxmills cadets could make in their march through the streets. This, with the singing of the public-school and Sunday-school children, ranked below the platform where the invited guests were to be seated, before and after the unveiling of the tablet, would be tastefully sufficient in Langbrith's more tempered ideal of the affair.

The cadets looked very well as they paraded, and the children, marshalled by their teachers, looked charming—the larger boys bearing school banners, supported by smaller boys holding the tassels on each side, as they marched to the library and formed themselves in the appointed order. They counted in their number all the children in town, except some inveterate truants in whom the Fourth-of-July excitement was beginning to work, and who opened their celebration at daybreak with the explosion of cannon crackers. Throughout the morning, the sound of their torpedoes broke upon the more ceremonious sounds of public rejoicing; and, when the procession formed, they made themselves its straggling escort, and followed it in the mixed admiration and derision of boyish outlawry. It had been proposed, at one time, that the mill hands, men and women, should join the procession, in such gala as they chose; but John Langbrith had passively disavored the plan, which had not found acceptance with the hands themselves. When it was brought to James Langbrith's knowledge, he decided against it, as something perfunctory and out of keeping with the voluntary spirit of the affair.

Falk, who stayed over the week as Langbrith's guest, praised his decision as a stroke of surprising wisdom. He mingled with the operatives, on the rear, where they formed the great mass of the spectators, and was able to report to Langbrith a satisfaction with their unalloyed holiday which he was sure they would not have felt in the procession. He himself refused any share in the ceremonies by refusing a seat among the invited guests; and when he was not going about and feeling the public pulse in Langbrith's interest, he amused himself by making the three young girls under his charge laugh, or try to keep from laughing, at his remarks on the general and personal aspects of the occasion, especially on the activities of Langbrith, as host, and Matthewson, as chief-marshal. Susie Johns was not concerned in either of them, and could laugh

at both, without the fond misgiving of Jessamy Colebridge or the perverse delight of Hope Hawberk, as Falk made them note the majesty of Matthewson in ushering the invited guests up the stairs of the platform, and the urbane hospitality of Langbrith in receiving them at the top and appointing them their seats. The girls laughed so much, and Falk kept so grave, that glances of reproof for them and sympathy for him were shot from neighboring eyes, while the band brayed on, and the crowd packed into the square before the library, cheered each guest as he mounted and took his place.

They were, first of all, the oldest employees of the Langbrith paper-mills, women as well as men, who were given the seats next the speakers; veterans of the Civil War had the seats behind them; and then the village dignitaries, the selectmen, the high-school principal and the Sunday-school superintendent, with citizens of no official quality, but eminent in business, or entitled to recognition by their age or social standing. Before all sat Judge Garley, Mr. Enderby, Father Cody, the orthodox minister, and John Langbrith. At the last moment, Matthewson was seen receiving Dr. Anther at the foot of the steps, and then Langbrith, with a forward start and a flush of surprise, greeted him at the top. The young man's face was lighted with a joyful smile, as he clung to Anther's hand and bubbled an incoherent welcome, looking round to see where he should place his father's old friend. He restrained a movement of Anther toward the rear seats, and led him forward and put him between the judge and the rector, who made room for him with dumb shows of courtesy. The band brayed out afresh, and the general applause of the crowd rose in such personal cheers as: "Hurrah for Dr. Anther! Hurrah for Dr. Anther!" Hope took out her handkerchief and waved it, and then Jessamy and Susie took out their handkerchiefs and waved them. The doctor sat down abashed, and his lowered gaze fell upon the veiled face of a woman sitting in the foremost row of chairs, placed in the little square before the library. At sight of Amelia Langbrith, a sad smile overspread Anther's reddened visage, and he did not again lift his head till the orthodox minister had ended his prayer. Between this and the oration of Judge Garley, there was a little interval which was filled with a tumult caused by some unexpected event at the foot of the steps. The tumult passed with the slow mounting of a figure to the platform, and its momentary hesitation at the top; then the gaunt shape and blotched, brown visage, with the deeply sunken eyes of Hiram Hawberk showed themselves spectrally to the crowd. Inarticulate cries and gasps broke from it, and shaped themselves in derisions like "Three cheers for Hawberk!" "Hurrah for Hawberk!"

Langbrith turned from whispering to Judge Garley; at sight of Hawberk, he flashed a silencing glance at the crowd, with a scornful lift of his young head, and hurried toward him with outstretched hands. He seized Hawberk's trembling hand as he had seized An-

ther's, and then, placing it under his arm, led him forward. There was no place among the front seats, but every occupant of them rose, and offered his place to Hawberk. Langbrith waved the others down, while he spoke to his uncle. Then John Langbrith, chewing the splinter of wood on which he had been sardonically working his jaws from the first, shook hands with Hawberk, and pulled him into his place, where he took Anther's hand, proffered across their knees, and remained dimly looking out over the people.

"Why, I thought your father wasn't coming, Hope," Jessamy Colebridge said.

"I suppose he changed his mind," Hope answered quietly. But she dropped her veil as she rose with the rest at the uplifting of Father Cody's voice in the words of the invocation.

The priest had been chosen for the opening ceremony to satisfy him in certain scruples with reference to his association with the Protestant clergy, which the committee treated with the large indulgence of an underlying indifference in sectarian matters. But afterwards their choice was felt to be almost providential. The dignified form of his words and the sort of sacerdotal authority with which he pronounced them, struck a note fortunate for the after proceedings, which these obeyed. It did not, indeed, form a law for the excursive generalities of the oration which Judge Garley delivered, but it tempered him to perhaps greater simplicity and directness than he would otherwise have had. He paid a tribute both to the secular and sacred character of the priest, which gathered all Father Cody's parishioners to him, and carried them attentively with him wherever he strayed. But no one followed him so closely, so curiously, as Dr. Anther, who was, as anxiously as he was unwillingly, alert to see what course the legal mind would take among the difficulties so evident to him. It could not be said that Judge Garley made light of the difficulties; lightness was not a thing imaginable of him; but he won his way among them by leaps and bounds, which, if ponderous, certainly got him over the ground, and by turns which, if not agile, were undeniably effective. He made a background of the history of Saxmills, from the earliest Colonial period down through the old French War, the Revolution, the last war with Great Britain and the invasion of Mexico, to the great civil strife for the maintenance of the Union; and then, in the middle distance, he sketched the rise of the manufacturing interests of New England, with their share in the immense expansion of industries throughout the country, after the pacification of the South and the establishment of the great principle of manhood suffrage on the rock of the Constitution. Such, he said, was the time, such the place, such the situation that confronted the man whose far-seeing enterprise had given Saxmills its unsurpassed prosperity, and whose munificence, in one of its many instances, they were tardily recognizing to-day. They all knew *who* that man was; but *what* was he?

Anther held his breath as he watched his old friend standing before the impressive canvas he had prepared, and wondered what manner of heroic effigy he would paint upon it. From where he sat, beside Hawberk, feeling the tremor of his limbs when they chanced to touch his own, and breathing the narcotic odors that exhaled from his person, he could not catch the eye of the orator, which presented itself only in profile, as he shook his head in challenge and pounded the air with his fist in accentuation of his appeal. Except that he knew the judge to have justified himself invulnerably through his professional conscience, he might have thought that he kept his face purposely averted, and he held his breath when Garley resumed. "I never spoke with the man, I never saw him, I never heard his name till I came to live among you here. He was no friend of mine, not even my acquaintance, yet from his works I *know* him." But when Garley reached the end of his characterization of Royal Langbrith, Anther laughed in his heart, with no wish to utter its bitterness to his old friend, as he resoundingly closed with the words: "Such was the man, such was the character, such was the personality, whose counterfeit presentment shall be revealed to us this day, and each day shall show him to others after we are dust, as long as stone and bronze shall endure."

On that magnificent background the scenic artist had really painted nothing: nothing but what might pass for one enterprising and successful American as well as another: the mere conventional outline of a face or a figure which a thousand names would fit as well as Royal Langbrith's. He had carefully avoided not only distinctive traits, but he had, with purpose evident enough to Anther, kept a surface as impenetrable as it was shallow. He had given this surface a glare which dazzled the eye and distracted the thought from the performance to the performer; and Anther judged him less and less harshly as he considered that Garley had discharged a duty which he could not shun as guiltlessly as it could be discharged. No one but the brother and the widow of Royal Langbrith knew how false an impression he had made; for it could not be said that his narcotized victim realized it, and none save the rector, who was to follow him, knew how false he had been in making it. Anther did not condemn him. Garley, too, was in the grip of that dead hand which seemed to clutch every one by the throat, and his severest feeling toward him was for the deceit which he had practised upon the son of Royal Langbrith. He could see James Langbrith where he had retired from the platform to the place beside his mother, watching the speaker with what Anther felt a piteous intensity, and hanging upon every empty word. With tender compassion Anther wondered if he felt the hollowness of the tribute paid to his father's memory. He was touched for that poor, generous boy, and ashamed more than he was amused for his old friend in the success of his fraud. When the applause swept the orator to his seat, and then refluent bore him, bowing and smiling,

back to the front of the platform, the young fellow started forward, and, all glowing with tears and smiles, stretched his hand up to the judge and the judge stooped down to take it. Anther dropped his eyes and hung his head, and he had not the courage to look up again till he heard Enderby beginning, very gravely and measuredly, the address which the dead man was requiring of him, in his turn. Then Anther's pity was no longer for the trusting boy, but for the good man, compelled to this office, and he wondered how he would reconcile it with his conscience.

Enderby stood clutching the scant lapels of his clerical coat, and looking pale above its black. He said that he had been asked to speak some words concerning the ethical significance of the business they were about, and he would now only suggest a few general notions in regard to the respective attitudes of giver and receiver, in the matter of public benefactions. Such benefactions were likely to be more frequent in the future than in the past, when the town had become debtor to one of its citizens for this library, the most useful of its possessions, and the most sacred, after the houses of God; and they must be more and more impersonally regarded. The town was here in its collective capacity to make acknowledgment of the gift, tardily, it was true, but not the less gratefully; for, in the years that had elapsed, the people of Saxmills had fully experienced the great advantage bestowed upon them. It might, perhaps, have been wished, it might, perhaps, have been more graceful in some aspects if the town itself had offered the memorial it was accepting; but in that case it would have anticipated the act by which the son renewed, as it were, and confirmed the father's deed. For himself, the rector said, he was more interested in this renewal and confirmation of it, than in the fact of the original gift. It spoke well for the young man whom in different ways they all knew, that he wished to testify his reverence for his father's memory by doing again one of the best things that his father could have done. In this he had not only testified his reverence to his father's memory, but had borne important witness to the imperishable vitality of a good deed in this world. It was not only the evil that men do which lived after them, but the good also lived, laying upon the future a more powerful obligation to virtue than any bond to vice that evil could impose. God had apparently willed that the good should continually and eternally show itself, and the evil should hide itself, for evil, brought into the light of day, corrupted, and good, whenever manifest, purified and restored and strengthened all men for good. Such, in fact, was the potency of a good deed that, if done from the most selfish motive, it took no color from the motive. It returned through its beneficent effect upon the world to the God of goodness. But they who were assembled to receive from the son the evidence that he renewed and confirmed his father's gift to them, had really nothing to do with the character of either. They had only to do with the good-will

expressed in what was now their joint gift, and they were to honor neither of those men but only their good deed, which was not of them, but of God. Few present had known the elder of the two; all present had known the younger, and it was he who stood for both before them. Every heart must respond to the impulse which had governed their fellow townsman in his filial devotion to his father's memory, and must rejoice with him in the beauty and fitness of the tribute he had paid it. If either were to be known by the other, though it was not necessary, for the present purpose, that either should be known apart from his gift, let the father be inferred from the son, and let them not be separated in the public acceptance of their benefaction.

The rector would have sat down; but James Langbrith, who had remained on the platform after Judge Garley's oration, prevented him. He seized Enderby's hand, and Anther heard him say, while he clung to it, "You have spoken just as I feel my father would have wished you to speak. He was the most reserved, the most impersonal of men, and I thank you, thank you, thank you for him as well as myself."

"Oh," the rector groaned, in a sort of protest; but before he could say anything, the leading selectman rose in his place, and commanded, "Three cheers for both the Langbriths!" James Langbrith stepped forward to acknowledge the applause, and Anther felt Enderby's eye seek his own.

There was no defiance in the rector's asking look, but a sort of entreaty, as if for the effect his words might have had with the man who knew how, primarily, they had been spoken to him. Enderby's back had been turned to Anther while he addressed them to the people, but it had not needed the comment of the speaker's face to convey all their latent meaning to Anther, whose eyes were as troubled as his own. He put out his hand and sadly pressed the hand of the rector, who miserably smiled a little.

"You did the best that any man could, in the circumstances," Anther said, under cover of the uproar.

"Now, friends," said the selectman to the crowd, when the cheering had died away, "the tablet will be unveiled."

At the moment James Langbrith stepped back to perform the office, Anther saw Hawberk put something into his mouth and heard him huskily explain, "Thought I might need some, and brought along a little of the gum."

Langbrith pulled at the cord which had been contrived to separate the white curtains veiling the tablet, and slip them to the sides on the wire from which they hung. The contrivance would not work, though he tugged and twitched, and there began to be some nervous laughing in the crowd, which had its effect with him. He gave an impatient pull and the whole contrivance came away, dropping to the ground behind the platform. A girl's hysterical cry went up, and the people began to clap and cheer. Langbrith had

turned an angry face toward them, but their good-will was so manifest, their laughing had been clearly so helpless from the sense of humor which any unserious mischance appeals to in a crowd, that the anger went out of his face, and he, too, was smiling, when the voice of the selectman announcing that the Rev. Mr. Alway would ask a blessing recalled him to the necessity of a more appropriate expression.

While the people were stirring vaguely from the attitude in which the benediction had left them, Langbrith came forward and shouted, "Friends, ladies and gentlemen, there's a lunch at my mother's, and everybody is invited—everybody!"

The crowd cheered and the band played and the square emptied itself in the direction of the Langbrith homestead.

XXV.

The last of the guests had got themselves away from the Langbrith grounds late in the afternoon, with the difficulty that people unaccustomed to social rites find in taking their leave. It was half past four o'clock when Langbrith stood, with his mother, in the porch at their front door, looking down, over the trampled lawn and dishevelled decorations, at that fellow citizen who managed all the public functions of Saxmills, rushing about in his shirt-sleeves and directing his shirt-sleeved helpers in the work of dismantling and removing the long tables of rough board at which the hungry throng had lately joked and shouted and rioted.

The son noted the knot between his mother's eyes, and laughed. "You'd like to go out there and take a hand, mother," he interpreted; "but you'd better leave it to Danning. It'll suit him better." He sighed deeply. "It's been perfect, mother, beyond my dreams. It's been beautiful, ideal. I couldn't tell you *now*, without disturbing my sense of it, how happy it's made me. It's made me feel as if the people here loved me, and I do like to be liked, though I don't know how to show it, and that they cherish my father's memory. How good everybody has been—how kind! It was awfully sweet of the old doctor to come and sit on the platform after his reluctance. I won't forget it." Langbrith gave a short laugh. "He knew father better than I do, and he probably felt for him against the affair; but if father had cared to look down on it to-day, I can fancy his being pleased with it in some shy, reticent way. I wish the doctor could have come to the lunch."

"He said he had a patient—over at Wakeford," Mrs. Langbrith said. "I asked him to come."

"Yes, I know. I hoped he might have got back. Well, now, you must go in and lie down, mother. Take a good rest." He put his arm round her waist and pressed her indoors, and got his hat in the hall. "I'm going to pick up poor old Falk somewhere. I shall probably find him at the Johnses' unless Jessamy got away with him."

He kissed his mother and left her, not to lie down, but to go and take counsel with Norah about the things that Danning's men would be bringing in to be washed up and put away. He saved his conscience with respect to Falk by walking past the Johnses', and looking in over the fence, but he did not stay to ask for his friend on his way up to the Hawberks'. He did not know whether he had seen Falk sitting with Susie Johns at her door or not. Every sense of his was full of Hope Hawberk. Except as she was related to them she pressed even the facts of this happy day out of his consciousness.

Hope's grandmother came to the door, and said with grim directness, before he had asked, "She's round in the garden."

"Oh!" Langbrith answered, and he took the little path in the grass that the feet of the household had traced round the corner of the house.

Hope was sitting in a low rocking-chair, by the dial, which the sun had relieved from duty for the day by getting down among the tops of the pines on the hill. She was reading a newspaper, but she was not so absorbed in it that she did not hear his step sweeping over the grass. As she looked up, she laughed quietly, and in her laugh he felt a peculiar note of welcome. "Well, how did it go off?" she asked, and she let fall her paper, and rocked back in her chair.

"Don't let's talk of it," he said, and he crouched at her feet, with his back against the base of the dial. "Let's talk of ourselves."

"Well, what about you?"

"Nothing about me. When I say ourselves, I mean you, for you are ourselves. At least I am nobody without you."

She laughed again, but her derision was full of the love which she did not try to keep out of her eyes. His own eyes glowed upon her. Neither felt the need of speaking, till she turned her head away with a little difficult motion, almost as if it hurt.

"Then you will?" he murmured from somewhere deep in his throat, and she answered low:

"Yes."

He bent forward, and put his head on her knee.

"Don't be silly," she said, with a catching of the breath, while she smoothed his hair with her hand.

There was no other demonstration between them, because he knew that she liked best that there should be none, and it was a moment before he lifted his head, with a laugh of the joy otherwise unutterable: "I knew you would say yes, now. But why now? Why never before?"

She looked at him with the glowing eyes which she could not keep from his face, but it seemed to him that she no longer saw him so distinctly, for a mist that veiled their glow. Her lips twitched so that she could scarcely form the words: "Can't you think?"

"No. What have I done?"

"You want to make me tell you! How you acted to father—when—when they laughed—I said that I would do anything for you, then; I said that I would do anything you asked—"

"Hope!"

"Don't make me cry! I shall hate you if you do. When I need all the strength I have, so!"

"No, Hope; but listen to me. I must be honest. I didn't do that for *you*. I did it for *him*. I like your father; he was my father's friend; and I had nothing in my mind, but the thought of their old friendship. That needn't make you cry, or if it does, it needn't weaken you. Hope!" he kept getting her name in as often as he could, for the pleasure of speaking it, "I am not going to ask any promises of you, now. We will let the future take care of itself. But I want to tell you; I haven't told my mother yet; I am going to Paris to study; to study the stage, and learn to write for it; I believe I can write plays, and Paris is the place to study the stage. I thought I should ask you to go with me; but I see I can't"—she shook her head in affirmation of his words—"but if I can take your love and leave you mine, will you—will you—wait?"

"Yes."

"Oh, Hope!" he sighed.

"Oh, James!" she sweetly mocked him.

"Where was I?"

"You had left me waiting."

"Well, that is all, then."

They both laughed.

"Of course," he took up the broken thread, "I shall tell mother."

"You couldn't go without."

"Oh, I mean about you. She will be glad. She likes you so much, Hope."

"Well, I like her, too."

"And you will go to see her often, Hope, won't you?"

"Not often enough to cause remark," she drolled, and he laughed, and said:

"How funny you are, Hope! Falk thinks you are the wittiest girl he ever saw."

"Well, you've always told me Mr. Falk hadn't been in society a great deal. There must be lots of funny girls in Boston."

Langbrith thought that droll, too. "I believe I love you more for your fun than your beauty, Hope."

"Perhaps there's more of the fun."

"No, I don't say that. You are the most beautiful creature in the world to me. And Falk thinks that your dark style—"

"Well, I always thought Mr. Falk was pretty, too. So it's an equal thing. Now, we won't talk of that any more; it's too personal. We will talk about Paris. I shall never dare to tell grandmother that you are going to write plays. She thinks I'm bad enough as it is, and if she knew that I was engaged to a person who

wrote plays, she would certainly give me up. Does Mr. Falk know about your plan?"

"Why, he's going with me! Hope! May I tell you a secret?"

"Well, if it isn't a very large one."

"It's nothing. You know he is going to be an artist, and Paris is the place for art as well as the stage, and I am going to lend him the money. I'd give it to him, if he'd let me. What better use could I make of it? But of course Falk won't stand that."

"No, I wouldn't, in his place."

"Does he care for—I mean does Susie Johns care for him?"

"She never said so. Perhaps she hadn't been asked. She's rather queer, that way. She never answers till she's been asked. She's very secretive."

He laughed, and began in another place. "I wish I could have you with me to keep me from playing the fool."

"Why, I'm the greatest fool myself," she explained.

"No, you're not. You're the very soul of common sense. But I shall keep writing to you, and consulting you about everything, and that will make me sensible. And perhaps—in about a year—"

She mocked, "I was just waiting to know how long!"

"Hope," he asked at another tangent, "Dr. Anther *does* think your father's getting better, doesn't he?"

"He thinks his will is getting stronger."

"I understand you can't leave him, Hope, and that's why I don't ask *you* to go with me to Paris as well as Falk; but when your father is all right, and he *will* be, I *know* he will—then we will go out together—my mother and your father, as well as you."

"What a beautiful vision! And what about grandmother?"

"Oh, we would take her, too."

"I should like to see you getting grandmother on a steamer! Why, she thinks going on the cars is as much as her life's worth."

"We can manage, somehow." They laughed together at his optimism, and he asked, "Do you know what I liked best in the whole thing to-day? I mean besides your father's coming. Dr. Anther's being there. He didn't like the notion of the tablet at the first, and he let me feel it; but it was just his way—working round, and giving in handsomely in the end, without saying anything. My heart was in my mouth till he came on to the platform. It wouldn't have been anything without him."

"Of course, it wouldn't. But, of course, he was sure to come. He's grand."

"Yes, after my own father, as I imagine him, there's nobody equal to Dr. Anther, as I know him."

They talked rapturously away from themselves, and they talked back in ecstatic return, and an hour passed before he reverted to her with impatience of anything but her in her relation to himself.

"What made you cry out that way?"

"Me? How did you know who it was?"

"Don't you suppose I should know your voice, in the dark, anywhere in or out of the world? What made you do it?"

"As if you didn't know! I was so worked up by those curtains not coming apart, and thinking how you felt, that I couldn't help it, though I wasn't sure but it was somebody else. If it had gone on much longer, I should have got on to the platform and married you on the spot."

Langbrith jumped alertly to his feet, and Hope rose, too, laughing. He put out his arms toward her. "Now I think it's full time for you—"

She did not try to escape, but a sound of lamentable groaning came between them, and she called out, "Oh, poor father!" and whirled from her lover into the house.

He stood dazed by the ghastly interruption, and remained bewildered when, a little after, she returned to him, somewhat paler, but not looking as distressed as he looked, and dropped again into her chair.

"Isn't there anything I can do? Go for Dr. Anther?"

"No, no! It's all right, now. He was just dreaming—he has awful dreams, but they are only dreams."

"Oh, Hope!" He stood before her, not offering to take his place at her feet again, but aching, as she saw, with pity for her.

"You mustn't mind me. I'm used to it. And it isn't anything real you know."

"It seems terrible. I don't know how to bear it for you."

Hope smiled. "Well, you don't have to, and I can bear it for myself as long as—as long as father must bear it. Are you going away?"

"Yes, I must go back to mother—"

She rose, and without his advance, put her arms round his neck, and kissed him, and then began to cry against his cheek. It was not the passionate embrace with which he had often, in his burning reveries, sealed their betrothal, but it was something sacreder, sweeter, and he seemed purified and uplifted, as if her arms were raising him into heavenlier air. He knew now what misery and sorrow, what squalor, even, he was making his part; but he thought only of her with whom they came, and he was richly content.

"Your trouble shall be my trouble, after this," he began, but she would not let him say more.

"Yes, yes! Don't talk!" and while she brushed the tears from her eyes with her handkerchief, she pushed him from her with the other hand.

He accepted his dismissal. "I shall come back after supper," he said, and she neither invited nor forbade him. He did not go home; he could not, without first using the new authority which her love had given him, and he went round by Dr. Anther's office, to ask him if nothing, nothing could be done for her father. He tried to think about it all, and how he should press the doctor to some con-

clusion, to some definite promise, to some clear prophecy of a fortunate end; but it was confused in his mind with his love, and he was so lost in the sense of that as it concerned her and him alone, that from step to step, he forgot what he was about, and had to recall himself to his errand. Once he went down a wrong turning, and when he came to Mrs. Burwell's at last, he recognized the house with a kind of astonishment.

"The doctor ain't here," Mrs. Burwell called down to him from the window over the door as he stood with his hand on the bell-pull. She had her head tied up in a handkerchief, as if she had been sweeping; the impression of this was strengthened by her having a broom in the hand that supported her on the window-sill. "He hain't got back from that patient—drefful sick crittur, *I* guess—to Wakeford, and I'm givin' the place one last dustin'; I don't know when it 'll get another. I was *ril* sorry I couldn't come to the ceremony, to-day, but I got my mind set on finishin' my movin', and nothing couldn't seem to stop me. I feel bad about leavin' the doctor here, alone like a cat in a strange garret, as you may say, but I guess I got to. I don't know who he'll get in to care for him. As far forth as I can make out, he ha'n't even thought of anybody."

"He'll be in after supper, I suppose?" Langbrith said, with an imperfect sense of the words spilt on him, as in a stream, from above.

"Yes, if he *gets* any supper," Mrs. Burwell responded with mystery lost upon Langbrith's abstraction. "He's always in nights, you know, without he's got a call."

"Then I'll come round again, later."

"So do!" Mrs. Burwell called after his averted figure as he stepped down the two yards of path to the gate, and moved away with feet that wandered with his wandering thoughts.

Something had penetrated the whirl of his mind which centred around the idea of Hope all kindly and pleasant things, and he was afterwards aware of some meaning in Mrs. Burwell as to Dr. Anther which he had not taken at once from her words. Had she meant that the doctor had bought her house or hired it? He had lived there a long time, and it might very well be. But a magnificent scheme now suggested itself to Langbrith, which he would consult his mother about, and then propose to the doctor, if she approved. He would offer Dr. Anther his father's office, standing apart from the mansion, if he found he had not taken Mrs. Burwell's house; it would be more convenient for him, and it would be near the hotel, where the poor old fellow could get a meal at any time without being subject to such severities as Mrs. Burwell had practised with him, and as he must fall under again if any village person took him to board. Langbrith himself would feel so safe, having him there near his mother, for all advising and helping in any sort of exigency. With that lifelong friend near her, he would not feel as if he were leaving her alone for the year he should spend in Paris, before he brought Hope home to the old place.

He glowed with the thought of what motherliness and daughterliness there would be between those dearest women, and how he would protect and cherish them both in their common reliance upon him. He wished Falk was there. He would like first to consult Falk about it. Falk had so much sense, and would put his finger on any weak spot in the plan and laugh him out of it if it would not do. He felt the need of Falk so much and the desire of immediate action so greatly, that he turned from going home and walked rapidly up the hill toward Susie Johns's. He wished he could go and ask Hope's counsel, too, but it would be silly—he feared her thinking it silly—if he went back to her so soon; and if Falk approved, he knew that she would, and his perfected plan would be such a pleasant surprise for her.

He could make an excuse with Susie Johns, that he had come to fetch Falk home for tea; but, when he knocked at her door, the Irish girl who answered him said that Mr. Falk was at tea within.

"Oh, then, don't bother him," he said, and got quickly away, lest Susie should run out and hospitably seize upon him for another guest. "Don't say who it was," he called over his shoulder to the Irish girl, as he fled.

It would only be postponing the matter a little while. He could see Falk before he saw the doctor, which would be before he saw Hope again, and with the affair settled in his mind, he pushed down the side-hill street up which his own house looked. He had not reached the bottom when he foreboded a temptation beyond his strength at sight of the doctor's shabby old buggy and his sleepy horse, slumped before the gate. But now he suddenly recurred to the thought of bringing him to book about Hope's father, and getting his mother help to get something like a promise of Hawberk's recovery from him. He fancied first telling his mother and their old friend together of his authority for anxiety in the matter. Both these things must come before the offer which he wished to make, and which he now knew he should make without asking Falk about it. But which of the two pleasant things in his mind should come out first was the happy question with him, as he entered the wide-open front door and pushed into the twilighted parlor.

(To be Continued.)